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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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GOD'S WORKMANSHIP IN MAN.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.—EPH. ii., 8-10.

It seems very much as if the apostle had a conception of a possible manhood that altogether outran any notions of morality which prevailed at that time—indeed, that had not even been revealed. The line of development that seemed to open before him in and through Jesus Christ was one which was impossible except to a soul which was drawn by the power of God. It was to be a life and character wrought, not by human volition, however it might concur and incidentally coöperate, in an inefficient way. But that which he saw as the true manhood was so large and so far in advance of anything that existed, that he speaks of it as being the workmanship of God, through Jesus Christ.

We are to be saved, not by what we are worth ourselves; not by that which we have attained. Looking at ourselves in some sense as a piece of art, a picture, a statue, or an exquisite piece of machinery, we are not worth saving. In and of ourselves there is nothing worth preservation. And all the work that we have ever done on our own character and nature does not amount to any considerable value. If we are saved, it will not be because of that which we have succeeded in doing; it will be because of that which has been done upon us and in us by another and higher Artist-hand. If we inherit salvation in the life which is to come, if we enter upon a life of immortality in blessedness, it will be because we are saved by grace.

Now, I understand by *grace* simply generosity, divine goodness in the conferring of benefit, in distinction from divine justice. It answers very much to what we should call *liberality* or *generosity*.

A man of property in New York is presented every year with his tax-bill. And he does not pay it out of generosity: he pays it because he must—because it is right. It is a debt; he owes it; and:

he pays it out of a sense of duty. But we hear very soon that he has endowed an academy, or that he has built up a professorship. He has given fifty thousand dollars to lay foundations of education which shall go on instructing future generations. But this was not paying a debt. He was not obliged to do it. Nobody had a right to present any claim to him of that sort. He did not do this thing from the same feeling that he paid the bill which the tax-gatherer presented to him. He gave the money out of his generosity. And we consider that a very high type of character.

Now, when we read that we are to be saved by grace, I take it that God does not look on our workmanship in ourselves, and say, "Well, all things considered, that soul deserves to be saved, and I will be equitable, and save it." No; I understand that, looking upon men, God finds nothing in them that in and of itself is worth saving—that there is no debt, no justice, that requires that anything in them should be saved. But, nevertheless, I understand that God, looking on universal being, says, "I will save men." Why? Just because He feels like it. His goodness impels him to it. He does it because his heart is the seat of royalty in benevolence. It is a grace of God, it is a gift of God, out and out.

If you consider that this is the ground on which every human being is saved, if saved at all, it reflexly puts a very dark coloring, a very low estimate, upon the value of human nature, and human character, and human conduct. It certainly, by implication, makes man seem very sinful, and very crude and imperfect—as he is. Except through the generosity of God there would be very little hope, and there should be very little expectation, that any would be saved.

The workmanship that is here spoken of is conduct, and its relation to character-building. The vast majority of men have no ideal of character, whatever. Taking the race throughout, the greater portion, I suppose, scarcely have a conception of what we mean by the word *character*. They have a very few—and these the very lowest—rules for external action. That is the height to which they attain.

If you go within the circle of light where the Christian idea has raised up a conception of character, and where it has been advanced through some stages, implying the moral condition of all the primary faculties of a man's soul, their habits and their tendencies; if you take different persons that have this educated idea of character, and then measure human nature, you will find it to be very low. If you examine it by any true standard or ideal of measurement which the Gospel itself affords, you will find it to be so low that, as you go

on from step to step in the investigation, I think you will bear witness that there is nothing in it that is worth saving.

I do not mean that there is nothing there which may not be pitiable, or that may not address itself as a motive to divine compassion. I simply mean that, as considered in and of itself, the more you look at human nature—and that, too, in its best estate—the less reason have you to feel that a man deserves salvation on account of his own goodness and righteousness. I mean not only that men are sinful once, but that from end to end of their life they are so sinful, the style of their character is so low, the habit of their development is so poor, the nature of their individual action is so limited, or so mixed, or so imperfect, or so mean, or so sullied, that whether looked at in detail, or comprehensively, every one of them must needs say of himself, "If I am saved, it will not be on account of any good that is in me, but on account of God's mercy to my poorness, to my poverty, and to my wickedness."

Let us, then, look a little at what may be fairly expected of man—at what the ideal man applied to the real man will develop.

In the first place, it is very clear that among the primary duties is that of bringing out into strength and fullness and energy every part of that nature which God has given us in the talents that are committed to our trust, to trade upon—if you employ a commercial figure, or in the seed that he has given us, to plant and develop—if you take the figure of husbandry. No superfluous part is given to the mind. It is large. It is various. The faculties which are comprised in what we call the human mind, or the human soul, not only are many, but are related to each other in such a multitude of ways as to constitute a complex organism, every part of which is to have given to it its full value and force, and its proper education.

Now, in point of fact, not one fifth part of the average of the mind of man is developed at all. If the human body were to be developed as the human mind is, we should have monstrous feet, and monstrous legs, and monstrous hands, and a monstrous stomach, and a little button of a head surmounting them. We have all the basilar instincts in power among men. Whatever implies appetite, or passion, or force, or executiveness—all cunning, all deceitfulness, all those tendencies by which the lower animal nature either conserves or defends itself—these elements are strong in men without schooling.

The social instincts are next strong, but irregular. They are without any systematic development. The intellect is comparatively feeble here. Only parts are developed; and those are parts that

have some relation to physical and profitable uses. The moral nature of most men is almost *terra incognita*. That part of the human soul which lies the most nearly in communion with God is desolate.

As you go from the high estate of man to the animal below him, you find that strength increases, usually, in that ratio. This is true of men generically. The best part of the human soul is uncultivated. If it acts at all, it acts irregularly—it acts without system and without plan, under special provocation, or inducement, or motive.

So that, if you look at the average condition of men, even in civilized countries; if you take an inventory of men in the professions and trades, through towns and villages—men that are *very honest* and *very excellent*, as it is said, and as the world goes—if you take an inventory of such men, and estimate how much there is of them, what are they? They are living in their lower nature. They are populous there. There, there is no lack of furniture. But as you rise up from their lower stories toward their higher, at every step there is less and less furniture, and more and more desolation; and the top story is the worst of all for emptiness.

This view is not itself so piteous as the next consideration. Not only is every single faculty in the human mind to be developed, and educated, and made bright, but there is to be a harmonization of the faculties of the mind. There is to be a harmonious organization of all the mental powers. And it is here, perhaps, more than anywhere else, that we see how low man's civilization is, and how exceedingly low is his religious development. If you look at that part of man's nature that is more closely allied to the animal economy, and which I have been accustomed to call his *basilar* nature; and if then, above this, you consider that development of a man's faculties which may be called his *social* or *affectional* nature, by which he is allied to his fellows; and if, then, above this, you consider what may be called his *moral* or *ethical* nature, which includes reason, and all the spiritual intuitions, as well as the ordinary moral sentiments—if you take into consideration that each one of these departments is itself complex, that it is made up of many separate faculties, the question of organization becomes one of extreme importance.

There must be some direction given to the mind. There must be something like unity between the different faculties, or the mind will be at discord with itself, pulling in various directions. It will be full of alternations. There will be that in it which resembles the action of the waves of the sea, where one wave follows another, rubbing out the sand-marks that it makes. And life will be full of disturbances.

Now, men do harmonize their nature. One class of men will be found to give all the power of their being to their basilar instincts—to their passions and appetites. Every other part is subdued by these instincts. The whole force that is in them—whatever there is that is good in their higher nature—in their reason and their moral sentiments—lends itself to give impetus to their lower nature. They are strong and mighty, and, relatively, well-nigh omnipotent in their physical tendencies. And so they have very little quarrel with themselves. They have a line or direction; they have organization and discipline; and there is hardly anything in them that ever rebels. It is their passional nature that directs the economy; that lays out the campaign; and all the rest of their nature adds its force to this lower part.

So you shall find men with art, with music, with beauty, with every kind of noble instrument, carrying out the most infernal purposes. You shall find them making hideous resorts and dens, and garnishing them with all manner of attractive elements, merely for the sake of better serving the animal nature of men. And there is harmony; there is unity; there is subordination; only the highest is serving the lowest. All that is divinest, all that is nearest angelic in its possibilities, has been brought down and put under livery to that which is carnal and animal. And the manhood is prisoner to the animalhood in man.

Then, here and there, just the reverse takes place. There are many individual instances of persons who have given the dominance to their reason and to their true moral sentiments. That which is beautiful, that which is true, that which is just, that which is pure and imaginative—all these things are to them the chief ends of life. For these ends they live: and they have so subordinated the whole of their minds that all their social affections work toward these ends, and all their lower nature is auxiliary to them. Every part of the man, the whole force of his being, works through reason into moral sentiment, and, through that, by faith, into the invisible. And he is harmonized. His highest sentiments are put in a position of dominance, and everything below them works potently up toward it.

Now, intermediate between these two classes stand the great mass of mankind. They have no harmonization whatever, as a class of men. They are good to-day, and bad to-morrow. Circumstances—not any inward habit, nor any volition in themselves—determine their course. They are swept as the tide sweeps the straw and leaves that float upon it. They are without any definite moral purpose. They are without any distinct social object. They are without any decided animal tendencies. If they are under circumstances

where the inducements are strongest toward the flesh, they yield in that direction. If at other times the social affections are in the ascendancy, and circumstances are favorable to the development of these, they act accordingly. If, as is now and then the case, influences work with great emphasis on their moral nature, they respond to that. But their action is alternative. It is inconsistent. There is nothing fixed about it. Their mind is not organized around any one center. Sometimes the power is in one place, and sometimes in another. Now one part leads, and now another.

This is descriptive of the great mass of mankind. If you look at men with the idea of drill, and of the harmonization of every part of the mind, you will find that their workmanship is very poor; that they have made very little out of themselves yet; and that that which has been made of them, as I described in the second instance, has been wrought out by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. No man lives in this world who has wrought out supreme harmony in his nature around about his moral sense, except by the inspiration of God. I shall believe that there are blossoms on the ground and blossoms in the air when the sun is blotted out, quicker than I shall believe that there are any high developments of character except by the direct influence of the soul of God. All really good and high influences drop down from the bosom of God into the heart of man. We have enough in the physical world to teach the human body; we have enough in society to teach man's social affections; but the moral nature of man must have its pabulum directly from God himself. And whatever is good in man is not his own workmanship. It is wrought in him through Christ Jesus. It is God's Spirit that is working in us.

The great mass of men have not submitted themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ; and if you look on human nature as it averages in society, you will find not only that there is not the development of every faculty, but that there is not the carrying up to their full power of any of the faculties.

Nor, secondly, is there any harmonization of all these powers. They are out of joint, irregular, discordant, and for the most part unproductive. We are not to confound the success of men in doing certain things outside of them with their success in building up their own selves. A man may build a city, and yet not build himself. A man may excel in an art, or in a science, or in some department of mechanics, or in any of the humble relations of labor; a man may achieve success in certain directions, and these elements may indirectly be to him educators; but, after all, when you come to look back at his manhood, at what he actually is, the more you look at

him, the more you see that his success has not been very considerable, and that he has not much to boast of.

If you look one step further than this, you see not only that the individual elements of the mind are left undeveloped and untrained; not only that the whole mind is left without any organization, or with a wrong one, which tends constantly downward; but that every part of the mind is in what may be called a disheveled state. It will be found upon examination that every part of the mind is working in a low mood, upon a low plane, and without much advantage except from what is inherent in all minds. There is very little moral force such as comes from habit; and there is still less moral force which comes from the high automatic power of the mind.

I have said that even the highest forms of development are exceedingly imperfect—and it is true; but it is inherent in every faculty, by habit to develop force which it had not before. And in that direction lies intuition. I do not say that it is possible for a man, by sedulous effort, and by carrying culture in certain lines, and by certain methods, up to a given point, to come to that which in us corresponds to what is omniscience in God; but I do say that we can, by partial experience in ourselves, frame some conception of the direction in which omniscience lies. Men at first measure by the eye. From the power of seeing they pass to the lowest reason—the perceptive faculty. And out of that gradually comes the reflective reason. Facts first, and then the relations of facts. But the relations cannot be seen. They are abstract. Thus they develop a higher reason. And higher than this comes that kind of reasoning which consists in framing larger complex ideas out of the memory of what you have seen and what you have thought about. And when you have attained to this, you begin to be a reasoner and philosopher.

But there is a state higher than that, by which men who have trained themselves to it are able to see without looking. There is a power by which the mind seems to flash light out of itself into the obscure and void; by which, without the process of observation, men's minds jump to the truths far beyond them.

How many times, and in how many ways, do men show this! No man knows anything well, till he knows it without being conscious that he knows it. Everything has to be learned first by painful volition—by a consciousness of trying and getting. But when you have thoroughly learned it, you have learned it so that when you do a thing you do not know that you do it.

When you take a step, do you stop and go into a calculation

about it? Do you say to the muscles, "Now lift; pull"? But let a man be sick three or four months, so that he is unable to leave his couch; and when the joyful morning comes that the doctor says to him, "It will do you good to get up and walk to yonder chair," see that old baby get up! He never before thought about how he should set his foot down; but now, see how he puts it out of the bed; and how he sets it down here, because there the floor is level; and how he avoids that crack; and how, because that board is a little raised, he carefully puts his foot over it, in order that he may not totter! Every single step he takes, he thinks of and measures just as an engineer that was laying out a railroad would measure and think. He is so weak that he is obliged to learn to walk over again. He has to learn once more that which he learned as a child, and which he has forgotten all about. But after a month's practice, he will resume his old way, and go out of doors, and into the fields again. And soon he will chase the flying ball, and wrestle, and perform all those old joyful feats of the athlete to which he has been accustomed. And then, will he think of the stubble, or of this stone, or of that depression? No; his eye will sweep across the field; he will go over brake and through morass, sweeping with his eye from point to point, and he will act without thinking. His hand will see for him, and his foot will see for him. A man's whole body, under such circumstances, is a piece of brain, apparently.

And as it is with one part, so is it with every other part. Do you suppose that a musician says to his fingers, "Now touch A," or, "Now touch B"? Is there anything of that kind in the playing of musical instruments? Does not the finger itself find the keys? Does the flute-player think when and how the fingers shall move? It is the notes that blow up the fingers, evidently! He does not think about them. Do you suppose the type-setter spells out the words that he sets up? Why, a man will set up a whole column of news, and when it is struck off, and he sits down and reads it, it will be as new to him as to anybody else. He does not know one single word of it; and yet he has picked up the ten thousand types, and put them together to make the sentences and the paragraphs, with scarcely a mistake. All these processes are the lower forms of what I mean by *intuition*. The body has the power of training almost every muscle and part to do things without thinking.

And so it is with the mind. Men cease to calculate any more in small numbers. They *see* what two and two make. They are not obliged to add and subtract, unless they are unfamiliar with figures. For me, it would be a good half-day's work to run up a page

of figures, and result them; but my friend Charles Marvin would run up those columns, three or four figures broad, all at once, in almost no time, and set down the amount, and every figure would be right.

Now, where does this power come from? It is that inward possibility of going by intuition which does not stop to think of processes, but flashes out the result, and afterwards goes groping back to see how it came to be flashed out.

So far as these great powers which lie in the human mind are concerned, it is our business to develop them. Is it not the business of a grape-vine to bring out, every year, all the grapes that are in it? And is not that a poor vine which will not bear what is in it? And is there anything more reasonable than that we should find out ourselves by unwinding that which is wound up in us? A great many persons are developed here and there; now and then a faculty in them is trained; but is it so of every part of their reason, and of their moral sentiments? Even in the best men, are the highest and supremest elements of the mind, the supernal tendencies of the soul, all those ecstatic feelings which go to constitute the interior life of Christians—are these so trained that they flash light spontaneously on every side? Is that the condition in which men are?

Our own workmanship on ourselves is very poor workmanship. If we are to be saved, it is because there has been Another working on us and in us, who has done better by us than we have ever done by ourselves.

That last remark leads me to say that there is an æsthetic element in the development of moral character which is to the ethical just what art is to mere physical development. I mean that in the development of the higher forms of human character there is the beauty of fineness, of harmony, of symmetry, of proportion, of that which we call, in manufacturing, *finish*. You will find in the writings of the Apostle Paul, particularly, constant allusions, not simply to moral qualities, but to moral qualities in their highest forms of beauty.

"Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report."

Give without grudging. It is not enough that you simply give. You must do it beautifully. Your generosity must not be clownish. It must be fine. It must be noble. We are to be *easy to be entreated*. And if you are going to be lenient, if your obstinacy is to be persuaded, it is not to be done in an awkward or ugly manner. We are not to spit out our acquiescence. We are to learn so to be obedient to the highest nature that is within us, and so to train it, that when it develops itself into action, it shall be *finished* action.

When the cutler brings his goods to market, he may have the

best of steel in the blade, and the best of horn in the handle, and every part may be riveted strongly; but if the blade has not been polished; and if there be no finishing work on the handle, he cannot sell his stock. It is just as good for practical purposes as though it were finished; but people do not want it. They want their blades polished, and their handles finished; and they are so used to having goods sand-papered and burnished, that they will not take them unless they are so. There must be art in them. And this is carried so far that when articles are good for nothing, art is put on the outside to make them seem good for something. And men buy things for the sake of their looks.

The idea of perfection lies in the direction of the æsthetic—and as much so in social and moral elements as in physical things. Men are not now in any respect finished in their higher relations—I mean even good men. There are hundreds of men that are in the main laying out their life and character in right directions and on right foundations; but how few men know how to be good variously, systematically, gracefully, genially, sweetly, beautifully.

What is the average impression of the community in regard to religion—that it is beautiful, or that it is gawky? What do children think about ministers, and deacons, and class-leaders, and church-members? I am speaking of the best men in churches. What is the average impression with regard to them in communities? Are the substantial traits of religion so unfolded that they are like flowers in the garden of the Lord, full of fragrance and beauty? On the contrary, do not men think of religion as something stiff, something hard, something that consists mostly in reserves, withholding people from things which they want to do? Is it not regarded largely as a gaunt and barren cross—or, for the most part, a cross without the revered associations of Him who hung upon it? The more closely you look into the way in which the human mind develops, the more I think you will be dissatisfied with it when you come to compare it with any high ideal of development or accomplishment. The universal life in the faculties is low. The harmonization of the faculties to singleness of direction and unity of action and discipline is extremely imperfect, if not unknown. The development of habits into automatic action is of very limited extent. The fineness, the beauty, the finish, the loveliness of everything in the character of man, is far from any ideal standard. And the consequence is, that there is seldom an act which can bear the measurement of any high standard of human life.

I do not mean that there are not acts which are right as measured by our lower standard of right and wrong; but if you con-

sider how a man was made, what he was meant to be, and what he has in him the capacity of becoming, there is scarcely one single action that he puts forth which is worthy of a large manhood. There is very little beauty in him. Character is very low, even in the highest. Men are developed very strongly and very largely on certain sides of their nature; but looking at them completely, measuring them by the full conception of God in their creation—by any ideal of their possibilities—how very ragged and how very feeble is their character! The great elements of soul-building are in a condition of the utmost disorder and insufficiency. There is nothing in the soul itself which should tempt one to preserve it. There is nothing in that which we have sown and wrought out in the field of experience that would naturally tempt a perfect being to harvest it. There is scarcely anything in the regular rounds of human experience that one would desire to perpetuate. If you look at men as so many workers in the great shop-world, there are found few things that they have fashioned which the great artist God could look down upon with any considerable satisfaction. The things which we take the most pains in doing, when you measure them by that higher standard, the law of God, are so insignificant, are so imperfect, are so full of flaws, that you can hardly conceive that one would wish to preserve them.

If this be a just view of man's condition (I have purposely avoided theological technics, and attempted to develop my idea respecting the condition of man's nature from the more familiar side of modern thought) then, I think it fairly right to infer that at death one of two things must needs take place. When we come to look at the actual condition even of the best persons, in all the respects which I have mentioned, it seems impossible that a moral change of relative position should endue one with perfectness and with morality. If, therefore, persons pass out of this life with such a low average of development, with so little that is drilled to high moral excellence, they pass out, and enter into the kingdom of God on the other side still in the condition of scholars, we will suppose, as the children of a primary school go into an academy, where there are higher teachers, and higher branches, and where they themselves are better prepared to go on in their development, than when they were struggling with the prime elements or the lower stages of thought. It does not seem to me, as I look at men in the whole round of their condition and stage of development, that on dying they can be expected to enter upon a perfected state. There is in them so much that is not developed at all, so much that is deaf and dumb, so much that is comparatively paralyzed, so much that

is shrunk; there is in them so low an average of development on every side, that it seems to me impossible that anything short of a miraculous touch of re-creation can bring them, in a moment, though they are set free from the body, to the attitude of perfect beings.

We enter the kingdom of heaven, in more senses than one, as little children. I take it that we leave this world to go on with our stages of discipline—not the same which we have here, but what will, in our changed conditions and circumstances, be equivalent to what discipline is in our earthly relations. But it does not seem to me rational that we shall be trudging, trudging, trudging, clear up to the moment of death, and that then we shall start up absolutely different. There will be another climate, another soil, and a nobler growth; but there will be *growth*. That which you have not learned here, you must learn there. That which you have left undone in this world, you must do in the world to come.

In Labrador, the missionary, at the beginning of a short summer, sows the seed of the vine. It comes up, and gets a little start, and is taken out of the soil and husbanded during the winter, to be put out again when the next brief summer sets in. But in the course of the ten years of this missionary's life in that cold region, the vine does not get more than three or four feet high, and never shows any symptom of bud, or blossom, or cluster. The soil is too cold, and the summer is too short. At length, the missionary is recalled to his native land, and he takes this vine, the pet of his leisure, and brings it down into our southern latitudes, and plants it. It is now the same vine; it has the same root; but it is not the same sky that is over it. Look long, O Summer! Look warm, O Sun! Search and find where the hidden things in the vine are. Behold, how it begins to shoot up! See what a stately growth it is having! Look at the branch upon branch which it is throwing out! Observe the smell in the air! See the blossoms, and after the blossoms, the clusters which the autumn shall see hanging impurpled and ripened! But it took another soil and another sun to produce it. It never would have reached that state in Labrador.

I remark, secondly, that if this general view of human nature be correct—if man is as undeveloped, as irregular, as imperfect, as inconsistent as the tenor of this discourse has indicated—then there is no more noble experience known among men than that which strong men are accustomed to look upon with the most suspicion. The fact that a man is under profound suffering from a sense of his own sinfulness—or, in common phraseology, that he is under *a powerful conviction of sin*—is regarded by multitudes of men as an evidence of want of strength of judgment. It is thought that men who are

thus affected are laboring under a hallucination of mind, and that they are subjecting themselves to requirements which are too severe, which are not natural, and which do not belong to the truest conception of manhood.

There are a great many mild-mannered men, men of meekness because men of weakness, who seem to sail through life without ever being agitated. Did you ever see a brook only an inch deep that could have waves twenty feet high? If a man is shallow enough, he will not be deeply moved. And multitudes of men are serene, and go through life quite satisfied with themselves—and I thank God that there is anything in the universe that can be satisfied with them.

But I speak of men who have some sense of the depth and the power which there is in the soul. There are men who have some sense of the reach which there is in eternity. There are some men whose conception of character and whose self-esteem take hold upon immortality. These men cannot afford to be lost, nor to run any peril of loss. And to such men there is nothing more wise, nor more profoundly philosophical, than this very sense of sinfulness, which so many regard with contempt.

When you take a large conception of what the possibility of manhood is, as sketched in the word of God, there is not one part of a man's nature which is not stained. There is not a single faculty in which he does not sin every day. There is not a feeling in him which is not flawed and enfeebled; which is not irregular and inconstant; and which is not used for selfishness more than for benevolence; for lust more than for purity; for the animal more than for the spiritual.

This is not confined to one part of the mind. It extends all through it. And if a man thinks of himself as lying under the eye of God, the Supreme, I do not marvel that his soul heaves with a sense of its own worthlessness and unworthiness before God. There is no more manly experience in this world than the laying of the hand upon the mouth, and the mouth in the dust, and the crying out, "Unclean! unclean! God be merciful!"

I remark, thirdly, that the church, and all its members, stand before God just as every other man stands before him, in so far as absolute character is concerned. When men have been converted, they are simply begun upon by a higher power. They are not perfected. And no man is saved because he has been baptized. No man is saved because he is a member of the church. The fact that a man is a member of the church is no evidence that he is good in any important and proper sense of that term. A man is not less a

sinner in the church than he is out of it, in this more generic use of the word *sinfulness*. Every man that is in the church is dependent simply on the generosity of God. If you are saved, and if I am saved, it will be because, having been brought into the church, we made such good use of our time that, with the help of God, we repaired the damage of sin, so that every side of our character was being built up, and gave promise of being a fit temple for the New Jerusalem, whose walls are built of precious stones, and whose gates are of pearl. By nature, we are full of pride and selfishness; we are of the earth, earthy. All through us is imperfection, and stain, and rottenness; we are altogether sinful; and the best that can be said of us is that we are attempting what others are not attempting; that we have a noble purpose, and that we are striving upward to the absolute condition of perfect men. Every man before God is a creature of such sinfulness that he is obliged to say of himself, "By the grace of God: not by my own virtue and goodness, but by God's generosity, dying for me, and bearing my burden, I shall be saved, if I am saved at all. It will be, not anything that is beautiful or good in me—oh, no! but the unspeakable pity, the profound sorrow, the mercy that is in Christ Jesus."

Therefore the reality of sin, the existence of deadly evil, should be no reason why one should not repair to God for sympathy and for succor. There are many who, being conscious of wickedness, and, not being Christians, do not see why they should ask divine succor. There are many who are conscious of being bound by evil and they fain would break away from it. If only they were Christians, and in the church, God would help them; but they are sinners, and out of the church, and they dare not go to God. Many a man would fain break away from the cup, but he knows that his own strength is insufficient; and as he is not a Christian, as he has made his investments in evil, he does not feel that he has a right to draw upon the bank of divine mercy. He keeps no account there, and he has no reason to think that his check will be honored there if he presents it.

Now, there is not a human being in or out of the Church who is not an object of divine compassion and divine love. God may have the love of complacency when his Spirit shall have drawn you more and more into the lines and lineaments of his own blessed beauty; but God is Love, and he will not wait for your turning before he loves you. God so loved the world that he gave his son to die for it, and to die for it while yet it was in sin—yea, and at enmity to him. God's love precedes all reformation. And there is no man—not a drunkard, not a gambler, not a thief, not a person that is filled full

of passions and appetites—who has not a right, to-day, now, here, in his heart, to look up and say, “God help me!” Your sinfulness is not a reason why you should keep away from God. It is the very reason why you should go to him. He is to your soul what the physician is to your body. When your body is racked with pains, or is swollen with disease, you go to the physician, that he may heal you. And so, the consciousness of your sin, and of the hateful-ness of it, is the very reason why you should go to God.

But may a sinner pray? Who may pray, if not a sinner? If a sinner may not pray, then who on earth may?—for there is not a man on earth that is not a sinner. Every human soul is so far from the goal of perfection that if sinners could not pray there would be no utterance of prayer. Yes, each sinning soul may pray when it has a consciousness of its wickedness and uncleanness. That is the time that God invites you to call upon him. Will God hear the prayers of wicked men? Yes, he will. He has heard them since the world began. No man ever desired to be better that that desire was not the witness that God was present, influencing and persuading him.

Do not wait, then, till you are members of the Church, and do not wait till you are changed, before you begin to pray. Oh selfish man, who does not want to be selfish! that aspiration for something better is of God. Oh proud man, who sees a better way! that seeing is the light of God. Oh worldly man, who is conscious of spiritual things! that consciousness is of God. These are things that the Father sends to you as imperfect children. Poor you are, sinful you are, low and wretched and wicked you are; but there is might in God. Call upon him, venture upon him, and he will transform you into his own glorious image, and make you meet for the inheritance of eternal life.

There is nothing that makes discords in churches, and discords between separate churches so hateful as the consciousness of the imperfection of all churches and all church-members. To see a general breaking out among well, strong men, is bad enough; but to see men who are gathered together in a plague-hospital fall out with each other, and to see bed rail at bed, and fevers send gibes over to fevers, and dropsies swell with tumid importance and great superiority over emaciations, and emaciations point and chatter at the hideousness of dropsies—that is worse still. What would you think of a conflict where cripples were fighting cripples? What would you think if you saw dying men using their waning breath to rail at dying men?

But are not all churches hospitals? As God looks upon his chil-

dren of different names, does he not see that they all are dependent upon his generosity and grace? What man, measured by the divine standard, is good enough to set himself above his neighbor? What man has not, as God sees him, so much of the canker and rust of pride as to take away from him the right of arrogance? To that very point Christ spoke the parable, where he that had been forgiven went out and laid his hand upon his fellow servant's throat, and said, "Pay me what thou owest me!" and would not be lenient. God teaches us that we are debtors to him, living on amnesty and forgiveness. We are fed by divine mercy. And surely, God's goodness to us ought to teach us to be forbearing and lenient toward others. No man is so good that he can afford to become a censor. Certainly, no man can afford to speak censoriously of the faults of others who are in churches around about him. For the one great household on earth, the one great family of man, the race, live in the very first stages of development; and imperfection and rudeness and ungrowth characterize them all; and at every step of unfolding we see some irregularity, some perversion, some sinfulness; and all through, from top to bottom, the whole earth groans and travails in pain by reason of unfulfilled conceptions and aspirations, of mistakes, and of sins; it is only the grace and mercy of God that keeps the whole world from dismal collapse, that raises it higher and higher in the moral scale from generation to generation, and that shall yet bring out of it, not our workmanship, but God's—*his workmanship in the human soul through Jesus Christ our Lord.*



PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.*

O Lord our Saviour, we remember thine earthly love. We remember the tenderness of thine heart for little children. We remark how they ran toward thee, such was thy winning way. Nor wouldst thou permit any to separate them from thee. Thy heart was warm toward them. Thou didst put thine arms about them, and thine hands upon them; and thou didst bless them. And it would seem, ever since, that children have taught us our best lessons of thee. We still hear thee saying, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Lord, how far have we wandered from our early purity, and simplicity, and trustfulness, and clinging love! How much do we need to be brought back again, and to become lowly, gentle and pure of heart—unsullied and unstained.

Grant, we beseech of thee, thy blessing to rest upon these dear parents; and while they are, with all fidelity, instructing these children, may they also learn from them lessons which shall be of comfort and of great profit to them, all their lives long. Every day, as they bear and forbear, for love's sake, may they understand thy patience and forbearance toward them. Every day, as they deny themselves, and find greater delight in doing for

* Immediately following the baptism of children.

others than in doing for themselves, may they understand the royalty of thy nature and of thy government. Every day, as they see what labor love will endure, how long it will suffer, how unwearied it will be, through good report and through evil report, and how fruitful it will be unto the end, may they understand the everlasting glory and summer of thy love to them. O Lord! how slowly have we learned, in whose houses so many teachers have been sent! How many times have the gates been opened, and thou sent through thy little ones to be our instructors! How slow are we to believe! How dull to understand! But at last, we beseech of thee, that we may be caught up into that most blessed of all knowledge, the knowledge of thy pity, thy tenderness, and thy love, which forgives, and heals, and lifts, with wondrous strength, those that are fallen down, and puts them again upon their feet, and establishes their going.

We beseech of thee, O Lord our God! that thou wilt grant unto every one of us more and more trust in thee. As we have less and less occasion to trust ourselves, may we see that our help is of thee; that all our love comes from thee; that we stand in thy thought; and that it is because thou dost not forget us that we live in this royal way. May we remember to be to others, according to the measure of our strength, as thou art to us. And may we seek to know more of thee by seeking to fulfill to those around about us the same glorious offices of gentleness, and patience, and forgiveness, and sympathy, and helpfulness which thou art evermore practicing toward us.

We ask that the lives and the health of these dear children may be precious in thy sight. And as thy servants have come into thy presence, this morning, bearing the tokens of thy thought and love and blessing, forbid that thy should be satisfied with external rites; but prepare them to keep or to give to thee the gifts which now make their hearts so glad. And if these dear children shall grow up in this world, may it be in truth, in purity, in virtue and in piety. And we pray that thou wilt grant that a blessing may go with them out of the sanctuary. May the spirit of the house of God be borne with them into their own homes, to lighten them, and to sanctify them, and to enrich them. We pray for all the children that are in the church, and all the children that are in this society. May they not be forgotten in the hour of prayer, or in the secret places of consciousness and experience. And we pray that they may be brought up with all faithfulness, and that they may grow fruitful in all goodness.

Thou hast blessed the prayers of thy servants. How many there are that come this morning remembering the goodness of God to them in their children! How many there are that can look over their flock and see not one gone! How many there are who have not yet had the fountain of grief opened in the loss of children! How many have seen their children grow up to man's estate and walk in the way of safety, and of truth, and of honor!

And we beseech of thee, O Lord our God! if there be any in thy presence who mourn over their children, and who think thou hast hidden thyself, and forgotten to be gracious, that thou wilt comfort and strengthen them, and let them not doubt thy faithfulness. And may they wait. Though seed long sown seems dead, yet by and by, even after the winter, it shall come forth, and not perish utterly. May they have confidence in God, and persevere unto the end.

And, we beseech of thee, that thou wilt bless all the young that are gathered from Sabbath to Sabbath in our midst. Remember our Sabbath-schools and our Bible classes—all the teachers, and all that are taught. We thank thee that there are so many who have it in their heart to give their time and their strength in this labor of love. And while they are blessing others, may they be themselves more blest.

We pray that thou wilt spread abroad intelligence among the ignorant ; and may there be many hearts tenderly alive to the goodness of Christ to them, that shall go forth to bear tidings of this precious salvation, on every hand. Let no place be unvisited. On every household may the Sun of righteousness arise and shine. And may this great city be won to morality and piety. And, we beseech of thee, that all causes of evil may be overruled and destroyed ; and that all influences for good may thrive and grow strong. May love prevail against selfishness, and truth against falseness ; and may all things in the community tend more and more to the honor of God and the welfare of man.

We pray, O Lord ! that thou wilt bless thy churches of every name throughout the land. We thank thee for so many tokens of kindness among them. We thank thee for the growing confidence which they exhibit. We thank thee that thou art overcoming all divisive influences, and that thou art inspiring men with a spirit of unity. And we pray that thou wilt still unite thy people by heart ; by sympathy ; by common faith in thee ; by a personal experience of thy mercy ; by their labors for others. May they be united in self-denial, in pain-bearing, and in cross-bearing. And we pray that thou wilt thus give to us the confidence and conviction and zeal and faith of thy people in all the world.

And grant that thy Church may hold together nations, so that they shall not be rent asunder by intestine wars. Grant that nations may be so sanctified by the Spirit of Christ in their citizens, that nation shall not go out against nation any more to war. Oh, for that day of enlightenment when men shall live by reason, and by kindness ; when forbearance shall be a virtue ; when men shall not think it an honor to strike quick, and to strike often. Grant, we pray thee, that men may suffer rather than inflict suffering. May they be like thee, and bear each other's burdens. We pray that the long delayed predictions which respect this world, may begin to be fulfilled. Let not our faith utterly fail. Let us not doubt that bright time that is coming, when men shall be perfected on earth. Let thy kingdom, in which dwelleth righteousness come, and the glory of the Lord fill the earth, as the waters fill the sea.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be praises, evermore.
Amen.

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Heavenly Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt take away from us all pride and conceit. Give us to see, as thou dost see it, how barren our nature is—or that it is fruitful only in things evil. How imperfect are the best things ! and how wicked are they who have the most goodness ! How little have we learned ! How little facility have we in the management of the great estate committed to our charge ! How crude and imperfect yet are all the fruits that are in us. Lord, we thank thee that thou dost not choose us for our beauty, nor for our goodness. We thank thee that thou takest us from reasons that are in thyself. Oh, the depth of thy heart of love ! Oh, the wonder of thy patience ! Thou nourishing Father, thou ever-living and everlasting Saviour, it is out of thee that our life must come forevermore. And when ages have gone by, and we have had long experience of the ripening air of heaven, then, more than now, we shall ascribe all the praise, and all the glory of our salvation, to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

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